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*Testimony of Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association*

Public Hearing Subject Matter	Support/ Oppose
<b>GOVERNOR'S BILL 946:</b> AN ACT CONCERNING REVENUE ITEMS TO IMPLEMENT THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET.	Oppose Section 29(b)

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) is the first conservation organization established in Connecticut in 1895. For 120 years, CFPA has offered testimony before the General Assembly on sustainable forestry, state parks and forests, trail recreation, natural resource protection, and land conservation issues.

I am testifying today in strong opposition to Section 29(b) of Governor's Bill 946, An Act Concerning Revenue Items to Implement the Governor's Budget.

Section 29(b) proposes a complete sweep of Community Investment Act (CIA) funds from 1/1/16 through 6/30/17 which would devastate the critical investments being made in the following 4 sectors: Agriculture/Farmland Preservation, Open Space, Historic Preservation, and Affordable Housing.

Since the Community Investment Act was passed in 2005 with strong bipartisan support, the CIA has made over \$133 million in investments through over 1,300 projects in 165 out of 169 municipalities. In addition, the CIA has provided an important safety net for dairy farmers who have been struggling mightily to make it in Connecticut amidst difficult to absorb fluctuations in national milk prices. Overall, these projects have strong community support, are leveraged more than 2 to 1, and make a difference in Connecticut's economy and our quality of life.

CIA investments make a significant positive difference in our state's economy. For example, CIA investments in local farm businesses and land protection have contributed to the viability of the \$873 million outdoor recreation industry and the \$3.5 billion agricultural industry together generating 28,000 jobs. Over 3,000 jobs were created in the affordable housing and historic preservation sector due to CIA projects, and 157 dairy farm businesses were saved through CIA support.

In addition to providing funding for high-priority projects statewide, the CIA funds also partially offset the staffing costs of those Departments who administer them. To make up for the proposed cuts in Section 29(b) to the CIA, the Departments would need to draw funds away from other programs to continue their commitments to existing staff. Doing this would both hurt the CIA programs and other Departmental priorities as well.

CIA funds are raised through the payment of recording fees on municipal documents. This bill would not remove the responsibility for people to pay and towns to collect these fees, but it would divert all of the fees from their original intended purpose into the General Fund. This would frustrate the entire intent of the Community Investment Act to provide a reliable, ongoing source for funding for open space protection, agricultural land and historic preservation, and low income housing renovation.

Please remove Section 29(b) of Governor's Bill 946 and protect Connecticut's quality of life.